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Winchester delegation supports passage of comprehensive maternal health legislation

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The state has passed a comprehensive maternal health bill, with Gov. Maura Healey signing it into law in late August. COURTESY PHOTO

The following was submitted by the office of Sen. Jason Lewis:

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State Sens. Jason Lewis and Pat Jehlen and state Reps. Michael D
Michelle Ciccolo joined their colleagues in the Massachusetts Legislature

to pass a comprehensive maternal health bill that creates a state licensure pathway for midwives and lactation consultants, encourages the creation of more freestanding birth centers, establishes a grant program to address maternal mental health and substance use disorder, and expands the statewide universal postpartum home visiting program.

This legislation also mandates that health insurers provide coverage for postpartum depression and major depressive disorder screenings for perinatal individuals.

“Access to affordable, high-quality healthcare should be a basic human right and even in Massachusetts there is more we can and must do to improve healthcare,” said Lewis. “This important legislation will significantly improve access to care and reduce racial disparities for new mothers and infants, and continue to make Massachusetts a national and global leader in reproductive healthcare.”

“Ensuring access to healthcare is a top priority. By licensing midwives, expanding coverage for pregnancy related conditions and even providing for sick time for pregnancy loss, we are making families stronger and healthier,” said Jehlen. “I am glad to see this bill signed so we can address the maternal healthcare crisis and expand access to high-quality care especially in marginalized communities.”

“Massachusetts has the best healthcare system in the United States, but we continue to grapple with a maternal mortality crisis that disproportionately affects expecting mothers based on the color of their skin,” said Day. “I was proud to support this bill that employs research-based methods to address these inequities while also increasing access to reproductive care for everyone.”

“New parents and infants, particularly those from already vulne
populations, have often been underserved by our health care system,” said

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Ciccolo. “I was incredibly proud to vote for this bill which will provide essential tools and supports for those who need it most. I greatly appreciate all of the work done by my House and Senate colleagues to advance this excellent piece of legislation and look forward to its implementation.”

Key provisions in this new law include:

• Creating a state licensure pathway for certified professional midwives, and requiring certain insurance providers, such as MassHealth, to cover midwifery and doula services including prenatal care, childbirth, and postpartum care.

• Encouraging the creation of more freestanding birth centers, which operate independently from hospital systems, by requiring the Department of Public Health (DPH) to promulgate updated regulations governing the licensure of freestanding birth centers to ensure safe, accessible, and equitable birth options.

• Requiring that MassHealth cover noninvasive prenatal screenings to detect whether a pregnancy is at increased risk for chromosomal abnormalities for all pregnant women regardless of age, baseline risk, or family history.

• Requiring health insurers to cover medically necessary pasteurized donor human milk and products derived from it, serving as a critical source of nutrition for the growth and development of babies, particularly for vulnerable premature infants.

• Requiring DPH to conduct a public awareness campaign about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, and to develop and maintain a digital resource center that will be available to the public.

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• Requiring that perinatal individuals be offered a screening for postpartum depression and major depressive disorder, and that those services be covered by health insurance plans.

• Expanding the universal postpartum home visiting program administered by DPH and providing coverage for the program's services to better address access barriers and reduce racial inequities in maternal health.

• Allowing Massachusetts residents to use their earned paid sick time in the event of a pregnancy loss.

• Establishing a grant program under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services aimed at addressing maternal mental health to support the creation or expansion of initiatives serving perinatal individuals, particularly those in underserved populations, to improve mental health and substance use disorder prevention and treatment.

• Establishing a task force to study the current availability of, and access to, maternal health services and care, as well as essential service closures of inpatient maternity units and acute-level birthing centers. The task force will identify methods of increasing financial investment in, and patient access to, maternal healthcare in the Commonwealth.

After final passage in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, the bill was signed into law by Gov. Maura Healey on Aug. 23, 2024.

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Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

March 4, 2026

NEWS

Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

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FEATURES

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stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents “Chicago: Teen Edition,” a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS
March 4, 2026

Welcome Here’

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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